

Study at a U.S. University Fact Sheet

EducationUSA is a U.S. Department of State network with more than 400 international student advising centers in more than 170 countries. EducationUSA provides accurate, comprehensive, and current information about studying at U.S. universities. Our EducationUSA Advisors in Iraq will help you understand the opportunities to study at a U.S. university. EducationUSA Advisors in Baghdad, Basrah, and Erbil work with students by email, telephone, and in-person. Join our Facebook page (StudyUSAIraq) to get the answers you need about studying at a U.S. university. We are the official source of information about studying in the United States. **Our services are free.**

For students around the world, studying in the United States provides a lifetime of benefits and rewards:

- Quality facilities, resources and faculty;
- Opportunity for students to become highly skilled and competitive in their fields and leaders within their communities;
- Choice of different types of institutions, programs, academic and social environments, and subjects;
- Value for the money invested in higher education;
- Knowledge of American customs, culture, and history.

Preparing to study in the United States can be challenging and feel overwhelming. Here are some important ideas that Iraqi students need to know before they apply to study in the U.S.

The Application Process: Each American college and university has its own requirements for admission. Generally, they require an application, standardized tests, transcripts from your previous academic institution, letters of reference, and essays.

Finding a School: There are more than 4,000 accredited universities and colleges in the United States. Iraqi students should start their research at the EducationUSA website. This website provides accurate, objective, and comprehensive information about U.S. educational institutions and guidance on how to access those opportunities. The EducationUSA website provides information about applying to a U.S. university, selecting universities that match a student's study goals, and applying for financial aid. <http://EducationUSA.state.gov/>

English Language Proficiency Testing: As part of the application process, Iraqi students need to demonstrate strong English language skills. To study in the United States, students take standardized tests to demonstrate their English language proficiency. Currently, testing is available for TOEFL, IELTS, and PTE Academic in Iraq.

TOEFL® Test – Test of English as a Foreign Language: The TOEFL Test measures the ability of non-native speakers of English to communicate in English in the university classroom. Both paper-based and internet-based TOEFL tests are given regularly in Iraq. Students can pay to attend TOEFL study courses or they can study on their own. Students also pay a fee to take the TOEFL Test. U.S. universities accept the TOEFL test as part of the application process. <http://www.ets.org/>

TOEFL® ITP – Institutional Testing Program: The TOEFL ITP test measures English-language proficiency and is used for academic placement, progress evaluation, and exit testing. U.S. universities DO NOT accept TOEFL ITP as part of the application process.

IELTS Test: This test is offered by the British Council in Baghdad and Erbil. It measures English language proficiency (listening, writing, reading) and includes an in-person interview to assess speaking skills. Most U.S. universities accept IELTS test scores. <https://ielts.britishcouncil.org/iraq/>

PTE Academic: This English language test is computer-based. You can schedule a test one day in advance and test results are available in 5 days. Many U.S. universities accept IELTS test scores. <http://pearsonpte.com/iraq/>

Academic Testing: Students must check the requirements for the universities they are interested in attending, but many universities require an academic test for admission.

Undergraduate Studies (Bachelors programs): Many U.S. universities waive this requirement for international students, but some universities require SAT scores from all applicants (*Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) Reasoning Test and/or Subject Tests*). <http://sat.collegeboard.com/home> The SAT is offered in Baghdad, Erbil, and Suleymaniyah. Other universities may require the *ACT Test*. The ACT is not offered in Iraq at this time, but you may be able to submit the SAT score instead. <http://www.actstudent.org/regist/outside.html>

Graduate Studies (Masters and PhD programs): Most U.S. universities require all applicants to submit Graduate Record Exam (GRE) scores. The GRE assesses Verbal Skills (language), Quantitative skills (mathematics), and Analytical Writing. <http://www.ets.org/gre/> The GRE is offered in Baghdad and Erbil. Some MBA (Masters of Business Administration) programs may require GMAT test scores (Graduate Management Admission Test). The GMAT is not offered in Iraq, but it is offered in neighboring countries. <http://www.gmac.com/gmac/thegmat>

Funding your studies: Foreign students studying in the U.S. fund their studies in four ways:

- ***They fund their studies themselves.*** This is the way most foreign students fund their studies. All American colleges and universities welcome foreign students and can provide information on the cost of attending.
- ***They obtain funding from their government.*** Visit these websites for more information about scholarships that may be available for undergraduate and graduate studies:
Government of Iraq Ministry of Higher Education – www.mohe.gov.iq
The Higher Committee for Education Development in Iraq (HCED) – www.hcediraq.org
Kurdistan Regional Government Ministry of Higher Education – www.mhe-kr.gov
- ***They obtain financial aid from an American university.*** This financial aid can be grants or scholarships, loans, or campus work programs. Students should complete a Financial Aid Application as part of their application package. Use the EducationUSA website to find other funding options. <http://www.educationusa.state.gov>
- ***They obtain funding from the U.S. government*** through programs such as the Fulbright Foreign Student Program. Each year, the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad selects Iraqis for graduate level study in the United States. Look for information on the U.S. Embassy Baghdad website for a list of programs that fund studying at U.S. universities. <http://iraq.usembassy.gov>

How to Apply: Students should follow these steps to apply to a U.S. university:

- Start the research and application process at least 18 months before you wish to attend a U.S. university;
- Be aware of the time schedule. Most universities accept new students for the Fall Semester, starting in August or September. Some universities will accept new students for the Winter Semester, starting in January.
- Select 5 - 10 universities that match your interests and needs;

- Applications are usually submitted online. Follow the application process step by step as outlined on the university website. Completing the application can take quite a bit of time; make sure you have enough time to do a good job!
- Fill out the application for Financial Aid and submit with the application;
- Provide official copies of transcripts for all courses attended; be prepared to submit the original version (in Arabic) and an official translated version (in English);
- Many universities require foreign students to have their transcripts evaluated by an independent reviewer. Follow the directions on the Application.
- Submit official copies of all English language and academic testing; students can request that the testing organization (for example, ETS) send the official scores to the universities directly;
- Provide personal and academic references; choose teachers, professors, or community leaders who know you well and can give strong references with specific examples and details;
- Write a personal essay (or essays) as part of the application. Follow the instructions carefully. U.S. universities take these essays very seriously because they provide personal information about students that may not come out in the regular application. You should answer the questions directly, give specific examples and help the university get to know you as an individual;
- Submit an application fee in U.S. dollars; usually this must be paid online with a credit card; most universities WILL NOT accept an application without the application fee;
- Submit the completed application, including all other documents such as transcripts, test scores, etc.

Visa Application Process: The U.S. Embassy in Baghdad and the U.S. Consulate General in Erbil accept applications for nonimmigrant visas for Iraqis to study at a U.S. university. Obtaining your visa is the final part of the process of applying to study in the United States. You should apply after you have been accepted for admission at a U.S. college or university and have accepted the admission offer. Information about applying for a student visa is available on these websites: U.S. Embassy Baghdad <http://iraq.usembassy.gov>; U.S. Consulate General Erbil <http://erbil.usconsulate.gov/niv.html>

Types of Higher Education Institutions: There are several different types of higher education institutions in the United States.

Colleges, Universities and Institutes: Degree-granting institutions in the United States can be called universities, colleges or institutes. Colleges tend to be small and offer only undergraduate degrees, while universities also offer graduate degrees. An institute usually specializes in degree programs in a group of closely related subject areas such as institutes of technology and institutes of fashion.

Public (or State) Universities are founded and subsidized by U.S. state governments (for example, California, Michigan, or Texas) to provide low-cost education to residents of that state. Public universities tend to be large and tuition costs are generally lower than those of private universities. Also, in-state residents (those who live and pay taxes in that particular state) pay lower tuition than out-of-state residents. International students are considered to be out-of-state residents, and they may have to fulfill higher admission requirements than in-state residents.

Private Universities are funded by a combination of endowments, tuition fees, research grants, and gifts from their alumni. Tuition fees tend to be higher than at public universities, but there is no distinction made between state and non-state residents. Colleges with a religious affiliation and single-sex colleges are private.

Community colleges provide two-year associate degree programs, as well as technical and vocational programs. Community colleges can be public or private institutions and are sometimes called junior colleges or two-year colleges. An increasing number of international students are choosing to study at community colleges. Tuition costs are often lower compared to four-year institutions, and many have agreements that allow students on transfer programs to move easily into the third year of a bachelor's degree at the local state university. Use the

American Association of Community Colleges website to search amongst the more than 1700 community colleges in the United States. <http://www.aacc.nche.edu/pages/ccfinder.aspx>

Short-Term University Study includes programs such as Intensive English Language instruction, summer session studies, and student exchange programs. These programs are short, ranging from a few weeks to a few months, and they do not lead to a degree.

Types of Degrees:

The associate degree usually takes two years to complete and is awarded by two-year colleges. Associate degree programs may be "terminal" programs, which lead to specific careers upon graduation or "transfer" programs, which allow the student to transfer into a four-year bachelor's degree program as a third year student.

The bachelor's degree typically takes four years to complete and is awarded by four-year colleges and universities. The most common are a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) and a Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.).

The master's degree provides additional education or training in the student's specialized branch of knowledge beyond the level of baccalaureate study. Master's degrees are offered in many different fields, and are either a one-year or a two-year program.

The doctoral degree trains research scholars and future college and university faculty members. The doctoral degree certifies that the student has demonstrated capacity as a trained research scholar in a specific discipline.

For More Information

Join us on Facebook: <http://www.Facebook.com/StudyUSAIraq>

EducationUSA Website: <http://EducationUSA.state.gov/>

U.S. Embassy Baghdad website: <http://iraq.usembassy.gov/studyintheusa.html>

EducationUSA Advisors in Iraq:

U.S. Embassy Baghdad: BaghdadEducationAdv@state.gov

U.S. Consulate Erbil: ErbilEducationUSA@state.gov

U.S. Consulate Basrah: BasrahEducationUSA@state.gov